THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY,

AN

INAUGURAL SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

GALENA, SUNDAY MORNING, OCT. 26, 1856,

BY

ARTHUR SWAZEY, PASTOR.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

GALENA:
H. H. HOUGHTON & CO., PRINTERS, GAZETTE & ADVERTISER.
1856.

ALL ISIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY,

AN

INAUGURAL SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

GALENA, SUNDAY MORNING, OCT. 26, 1856,

BY

ARTHUR SWAZEY, PASTOR.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

GALENA:
H. H. HOUGHTON & CO., PRINTERS, GAZETTE AND ADVERTISER OFFICE.
1856.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

https://archive.org/details/workofministryin00swaz

285.177334
Sw29w

122.4157

SERMON.

"Let a man so account of us as of the Ministers of CHRIST, and Stewards of the mysteries of GOD."—I. COR.: iv, 1.

The Church may exist temporarily without the Ministry, but it is complete and permanent in its organization only when it is supplied with Pastors and Teachers.

In the passage before us, the Apostle, having carefully guarded against seeming, even, to desire an over-estimate of himself, claims, nevertheless, to be heard and heeded in the church at Corinth, on the ground that he is set apart of God for the express purpose of opening the secrets and applying the principles of the gospel. — that his ministry is with authority, — that it comprehends a work the brethren cannot fully perform, namely: The Stewardship of the mysteries of God.

Nor may it be supposed that this claim had reference altogether to the Apostolic office, in distinction from the general office of the Christian Ministry. If, at the beginning of Christianity, there was need of a stewardship of the mysteries of God, there is now the same need; for, by the same mysteries the world is to be saved. There being the same office, the claims that were made on the ground of that office, are warranted in the ministry at the present day.

The importance of the ministry to the Church is set forth in a familiar paragraph of the Epistle to the Ephesians, (iv:7–15): "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended upon high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. * * * And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man. *

17332G

* * * That we * * may grow up into him, in all things, which is the head, even Christ." The ministry, then, is a *gift* of God — designed to build up the church — to bring men to the same faith and knowledge of the Son of God; to make them sound in doctrine, strong in heart; until they come into the likeness of Christ, and are made one with each other and with Him in love.

There were originally five offices in the Christian Ministry. Three of them were in their nature temporary. The apostles, so far as they were a distinct order in the ministry, were witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, and had special powers, over all others, in the organization and discipline of *the infant* Church. In strict language, therefore, they could have no successors. The evangelists were, perhaps, missionary preachers, endowed with peculiar gifts of speaking. The prophets were those who received special revelations, to be communicated to others. These three orders of the ministry have in a measure passed away. We have, however, a sphere of labor akin to that of a New Testament evangelist; and, for aught we know, prophets may arise at any time in the Church. The different offices of pastor and teacher have been merged into one, though we have only a single page of history to turn back, to find the Puritan Fathers ordaining both a pastor and a teacher over a single Church. Whether or no there has been a departure from the original design in the institution of the ministry, as matter of fact the stewardship of the mysteries is committed, ordinarily, to a single man, and that process of "establishing," "edifying," and "perfecting," of the saints, is within the measure and range of his commission, as a servant set apart to a peculiar work.

The importance of the Christian Ministry is to be inferred from the Apostle's comparison of it to the Mosaic Ministry. He says, writing to the Corinthians, (2 Cor., iii, 3.): "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistles of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God. * * * Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament. * * * But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, * * how shall not the ministration of the *Spirit* be rather glorious. For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness *exceed* in glory. * * God hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation." If it might be said that none had arisen greater

than John the Baptist, and yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he, so, may it not be said, that the office of the law-giver to Israel, great as it was, was less than the office of the least of those who are accredited and faithful ministers of Christ, and stewards of the newly revealed mysteries of God ?

But the greatness and importance of the work of the ministry, may be seen by entering more particularly into the nature and aim of the work itself.

WHAT IS THE OFFICE WORK OF A CHRISTIAN MINISTER?

A part of this office work is to administer the sacraments. Whether the administration of them, in peculiar circumstances, may not be the privilege of the laity, is a question it is hardly necessary for us to decide. Whatever answer may be given, it is quite clear, that to officiate in the ritual of Christianity, belongs naturally, and by arrangement, to the simple functions of Christ's ministry.

That a certain power of discipline belongs to the ministry, is strongly intimated, if not directly asserted, in the New Testament. Passing by all that is said or implied of apostolic authority, as referring to a class of men specially endowed for a special purpose, and there are left yet, indications that, so far as government is concerned, a minister occupies a place not occupied by any layman in the Church. A pastor is not to lord it over God's heritage, but to be an ensample to the flock. The very injunction laid upon him not to *abuse* power, is a sign of power committed to him. The power is limited and balanced in a variety of ways, but it is nevertheless vested in him when duly accredited and freely chosen. Timothy and Titus are the only ministers aside from the apostles, of whom we know much from the New Testament. St. Paul, writing to the former, says of a Bishop, that "he must be one who ruleth his own house well, for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" "Against an elder," he says, "receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses," as though Timothy had a special responsibility and authority in cases of discipline. To Titus, who was pastor of the Church in Crete, he says: "I left thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city." "These things speak, and exhort with all authority. Let no man despise thee." "A

man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition, reject." We learn from various other scriptures, on the other hand, that the power of discipline resides in the brethren, or those of them who may be chosen to take charge of the affairs of the Church. We must therefore interpret the passages we have quoted in conformity with such a usage. And so interpreted, while they take an irrisistible or irresponsible power out of the hands of a minister, make it incumbent on him to see that the things that are wanting are set in order, and that heretics, or disturbers of the Church, are properly dealt with. He has the general oversight of these affairs, and may act with reference to them as it may not be competent for any other person to act, being, as he is, a bishop and shepherd of souls.

A minister may, and must, rebuke and warn; — not as one man may rebuke and warn another, but with a certain authority which is not to be despised, and which makes it simply a discharge of duty in him to do that, which, in another man, might justly be regarded as officious and meddlesome. He is responsible as no other man can be for the purity and growth of the Church. It is his charge, for which he must give account, and therefore he must be authorized to have the control of its affairs beyond that of others, who have not the weight of his responsibility upon them. And if any think it is assumption or usurpation on his part to exercise that superior control, they should be as eager to reduce his responsibility to the same measure as their own.

The Church is not what it is sometimes conceived to be, a *pure* democracy. It is eminently democratic in its constitution and government, but is a *modified* democracy. A social club, which has no officers, and in which everything is determined directly by the popular voice, is a pure democracy. A State Government, in which the most ignorant — or the wisest — have not so much voice as the duly constituted officers of the commonwealth, is a modified democracy — a republican government. And so is the Church, after its organization is complete, and powers are put, according to scriptural authority and usage, into certain hand. The Christian Ministry is a "*gift*" — or rather, a combination of many of the "*gifts*" of the New Testament. The minister is set apart by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery; but no one supposes he is any the holier on that account, but rather that he is clothed with power, without which it is impossible to conceive of office, and that as he is ordained of God, he has the pledge of God,

under conditions, for wisdom suitable to the sphere to which he is called. For no man taketh the office of bishop upon himself. He has an inward and outward call thereto. He does not choose the ministry out of his natural will, as one of the professions of life; but is urged to it by the feeling—"Woe is me if I preach not the gospel!" and is acknowledged by the church as competent to the work, by reason of their faith in the attendance of the Spirit upon him.

While, however, as a ruler in the Church a christian minister must not suffer his office to be stripped of its dignity and authority, by those who may be restive under the established order of the gospel; and must sometimes follow the Apostle's counsel to Titus, and rebuke sharply those who answer to the description given of the ancient Cretians by one of their own prophets; must "stop the mouths of those who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not," and give no place to disturbers — no, not for an hour; his authority is not like that conferred by any human government. He is to "set in order the things that are wanting," not by decrees of his own; not by an arbitrary determination of what the divine decree requires; nor by the rigid technicality of an acknowledged law; but by instructing,— by stirring up the mind to remembrance,—by leading others to see from his own point of observation, and bringing them into the light and glow of the truth. He is to rebuke with all long suffering and patience — to be more of a servant than a master — more of a shepherd than a king. His art of ruling is persuasion. Single-handed he can inflict no penalties, though he can, and must, insist upon the "thus saith the Lord," from which, when duly determined, there is no appeal.

The great work of the ministry is *to preach the gospel.* The commission is "Go teach all nations." It is by the foolishness of preaching that the world is to be saved. There are various ways, however, of preaching. It may be done from house to house, in the fields, in the workshop, in the market place, or in a temple consecrated to the worship of God; by a book or by a sermon; in fine, in every way in which the ear can be gained and the heart reached. The Apostles preached in the streets and on the sea shore; in attic chambers, in courthouses, on the steps of theatres, in palaces and prisons, in synagogues, in the temple; by letters, by sermons, by allegories and parables, by private conversation; and where or how most effectively, (if we pass by Pentecost) it would be difficult to decide.

As the people believed and churches were gathered, preaching began to be centralized. Set places and times were appointed for hearing the word. The Apostles were most, if not all of them, missionaries, who traversed the world to make known the remission of sins through Christ crucified, and remained here or there but a little time. Their first work, however, after planting churches, was to ordain elders in the churches they had formed; and the next generation of preachers after them, are, for the most part, the regular ministers of a particular charge. The work of the ministry, while it is essentially the same, now begins to assume something of a new phase. The preacher is to address the same people — to establish and build them up in the faith; to fortify a stronghold in the very midst of Judaism, or heathenism, and to keep alive the flame kindled by the apostles. A new convert himself, or an elder, who, from presiding over the assembly has come to be a teacher, he must now enlarge the bounds of his biblical learning, and furnish himself for a clear and constant exhibition of the privileges and the hopes of the gospel. He must now give himself to reading; he must meditate on these things, and lead his flock into fresh pastures day by day. Street-preaching, field-preaching and house-preaching, are not abandoned; but there are now regularly organized assemblages of the saints; others are gathered with them, and in these congregations is exercised, in a peculiar manner, the stewardship of the mysteries of God.

The ministry, in suiting itself to the different ages of the Church, has always made use of appointed seasons for exhibiting the riches of grace. The ordinance of a Sabbath-Sanctuary has come down to us, and the pulpit rightly claims to be *the* place for instructing and quickening the people in the knowledge of God. Whatever other work the christian minister may do or leave undone, the set preaching of the gospel is primary, and to it everything else must yield.

And as the minister must not only speak to the people, but, in speaking, *feed* the flock, he must be thoroughly furnished for his work. The saving doctrines of the gospel lie open to view, but to bring them into order in the minds of men, and into contact with their hearts, is no superficial or hasty work. Besides spiritual qualifications, the work imperatively demands a clear understanding, learning enough to know the folly of all mere learning, a knowledge of human nature, a thorough discipline of the intellectual powers, and above all, a knowledge of the revelation of God, and a stretch of mind that can make all things tributary to the

honor of Christ, and the verification of the truth. We repeat, the preacher must be *furnished* for his work.

In the first place, that he may not falsify the principles and method of the divine government. A man may be a good man — have the life of Christ in him, and yet be ignorant of the *genius* of the gospel, and so be poorly qualified to be *a teacher* of the things of the kingdom of God. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," is the simple covenant of life. But all the rest of the Bible was not written in vain. The numerous books are not stale repetitions nor antiquated histories, nor worn-out conceits; but each of them, and all together, a treasury of wisdom and strength for the Church, and an arsenal of power for the subjugation of the world. The gospel reveals a system of truth that has to do with the widest range of thought, the deepest sentiments of the mind; the interpretation of nature, providence and history, and the secret springs of universal holiness and happiness. The system is peculiar in itself; now coinciding with certain sympathies and judgments of men, now contradicting them; now stooping to common thoughts, now transcending the noblest reasoning; now revealing to us some feature of godlikeness and possible glory in man, now frowning upon our guiltiness, and darkening the future with terrific storms; presenting to us now a law, now a plan of mercy; now the duty and privilege of hope, and now the need of fear lest we should come short of rest; now declaring that he that wavereth shall receive nothing of the Lord, now that faith as a grain of mustard seed shall cast mountains into the sea; now exhorting us to be perfect, as God is perfect, now declaring that the best saint on earth is a liar if he says there is no sin in him; now admonishing us to remember the pit from which we were digged, now encouraging us to forget the things that are behind; now publishing the prosperity of the righteous and the sorrows of the wicked, now the fatness of the wicked, and the sorrows of the people of God; now insisting on obedience to God rather than men, and now upon obedience to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; and everywhere announcing the sovereignty of Jehovah, and the free-will of all intelligent creatures!

These truths are as harmonious as the spheres that roll above us, and illustrate each one the other. Nay, they are centripetal and centrifugal forces, that impel every soul that yields to them into the circle of steady motion around the Eternal Light. The letter killeth. It is the

spirit that maketh alive. And it is an easy thing for him who does not study earnestly the mind of the spirit, to yield himself to the letter, till he makes the government of God hostile to itself, and disciples under his intruction become the sorrowful victims of anarchy.

The first weapon on which infidelity seizes, is often some dislocated form of words, that in the scriptures, articulated as an arm of beauty and strength on the shoulder of truth. The first railroad stage to fanaticism, is frequently a blind zeal for a fragmentary text, that strikes a chord of the natural heart, while the *spirit* of the divine word orders a love and a discipline of life, which the man who writes the letters on his forehead knows nothing of. And for these things, the preachers of the gospel, who think they know enough of God's government, his scheme for saving men, and the processes of the gospel in the world, because they know what the beginning of repentance is, must answer, somewhat, each according to his negligence of the written laws of the kingdom, and his dependence upon the inspiration of his own heart.

To have well balanced ideas of religion, so that he is qualified to preach intelligently, and with profit, a minister of Christ must be ever exploring, with the helps of history, science and criticism, the depths of the unfathomable word of God.

Common sense, that rarest sense in all the world, of which we all prate so much and which so few of us have, will not stand in the stead of the utterances of the Most High. Conscience, that royal master when unfettered, but which, in bonds, has made the altar of God an inquisition or an auction block thousands of times, or sent forth the maniac with his flaming torch to set the world on fire in order to burn up sin, cannot stand in the stead of the oracles of serene and unchanging truth. Nor may the religious instincts, often so holy, and yet so liable to put passion for love, egotism, even, for humility, and man's judgment for God's, be a guide, instead of the written and unvariable inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Nor may long established opinions or practices in the Church, which have so many times proved to be as creeping vines, that have thickened till they hid the sun and smothered the life of faith; or as stagnant reservoirs of a once living tide, answer instead of "the law of the Lord, which is perfect, converting the soul; and the commandment of the Lord, which is pure, enlightening the eyes." The Bible is the guide, and therefore, as far as may be, must be understood by the preacher of righteousness. Empiricism may

be allowed anywhere else; but never in him who handles the word of life.

In the second place, the christian minister should be furnished in order that the gospel may be declared *effectively*. And we may say at the outset, that the times are such, and all men see and hear so much that is vigorous and earnest,— so much that has length and beam to it, that, whether right or wrong, they are quite disinclined to hear the gospel at all, unless there be something of the same elements in the preaching of it.

But what is better worth considering, is the need of the people. Of varied education, employments, and habits of thought; of varied experience and age, each must receive his portion in due season.

There are believers, divided into almost as many classes as there are men, women and children in the church: some, babes in Christ, and needing the sincere milk of the word; some, muscular men, veterans of the king's household; some, always hoping too much, and never seeing evil; some, hoping too little, and always in darkness and sorrow; some, troubled with hard doctrines, and stumbling at the very mysteries by which they live; and some, whose faith girdles the mighty pillars of God's secret judgments; some, always shrinking from responsibility; others, bold enough to put their unholy hands to the tottering ark, though it be forbidden them; some, skeptical and cold by nature; others, distempered and fanatic; and all with the seeds of life in them. These he is to nurture and guide and advance in the right way.

Surely to meet the wants of characters so various, the preacher should understand the gospel, so far as possible, from its Alpha to its Omega,— from the first pulse of nascent life, to the last throb of the saint about to be glorified. He should know the road to the Better Land: every spring that gladdens the wayside; every evangelist that welcomes and cheers the traveler; every chamber of peace; the top of every delectable mountain; every spot of enchanted ground; every lion, chained or unchained; every by-way hung with the garlands of deceit; and all the ingenious and gracious devices of heaven for the care and guidance of the pilgrim. What is good counsel for one,may be bad counsel for another. That which encourages the desponding, may make the presumptuous more secure. That which awakens and startles the supine and careless, may alarm the timid but sincere disciple. That which is a stone of strength to a man, may be a stone of stumbling to a child. And yet he should be able to instruct all and hinder none; and weave the truth into

such various forms, that it shall be a garment of sackcloth for the perverse, and a princely robe for all who have a right to the consolations of Christ. In the store house there is that which is just suited to the need of every man, however weak or strong, self-willed or obedient; however complicated the disorders that embarrass his life, or however lofty the heights to which he may have attained. The preacher must explore this treasury of divine knowledge, till, from the abundance of God's word and providence, he establishes the life and secures the thrift of every member of the family of Christ, that he may present them all—at last—to God without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing; for the design of the ministry is, that the Church may "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

There is another class of persons who are to be reached by the preaching of the gospel. Those who assent, but do not believe; whose intellects cannot deny the truth, but whose hearts refuse to receive Christ as the Savior. Some of them are given to business, and some to pleasure. Some there are, whose honorable life shields them from conviction; others, whose irregularities forbid them to lay any claim to righteousness; some who just begin to have conscious opinions in matters of religion; others who have long heard the gospel, and are hardened under it; some who have passed through many awakenings, and have not been renewed; others who look to the recurrence of such seasons as the hope of their salvation; some who have been brought up under the training of pious parents, and are yet prodigal; others, who never knew the family altar, never heard a father's prayer; some, who cannot feel; others, who can only despair; some, who are seeking after God, if haply they may find him; others, who, having once put their hands to the plough and looked back, are not fit for the kingdom of heaven; some, who have stood upon the threshold of life for years, in the peril of those who halt between two opinions; some, whom fear alone can move; and many, who fear nothing but the loss of their good things here.

Surely, Christ's minister needs the wisdom that comes down from above and is profitable to direct; to have arrows upon his bow-string fresh from the quiver of God, and tempered in heaven; to possess the meekness of them that inherit the earth; the love of an angel, the guile of the serpent, th determination and strength of the warrior, and, withal, to be furnished and refurnished, by ever new acquisitions of the knowledge of the powers of grace, that he may utter a distinct and individual

call to every man's heart, and shape the gospel to him as the remedy for *his* sin, and the only way of *his* salvation. One by one, must he tear down the refuges of lies; one by one, must he pluck away those slippery hopes from which the incorrigible shall slide in due time; one by one, must he strip off the gilding from the lying promises of the world, until the hearers repent and receive Christ, or the gospel itself is made a more terrible witness against them, and, having been exalted to heaven, they are thrust down to hell.

Is there a man on earth of so much devotion that all of it would not be requisite to this work? Is there a man on earth, of gifts so affluent, of learning so varied, of so great a stretch of mind, of powers so ingenious, and words so eloquent, that they would be superfluous in this ministry of reconciliation? How, then, must we, whose piety is so feeble, whose knowledge would be contemptible, only that it has in it something of Christ, recoil under the pressure of this ministry, when in view of it an Apostle, gifted with natural genius, and under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Ghost, was forced to exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

There is still another class of men with whom the preaching of the gospel has to do: those who deny and oppose the doctrines of the cross intellectually as well as spiritually; in numbers many, subtle deceivers, and being deceived; of all degrees of learning — of all stations in society; of all descriptions of character, from the openly profligate, to men of uprightness and integrity in the affairs of the world; using all modes of attack, from downright blasphemy, to the craft of Jesuits; from the scorn of atheism, to the skeptical, but smooth and friendly, betrayal of the gospel. Their strong holds are bar-rooms, theaters, printing offices, lyceum halls, colleges, and consecrated churches. Their weapons are ridicule, superstition, and the smatterings of philosophy and science. Their coadjutors are the passions of men, pride of intellect, and pride of life. Never, or rarely, do they hear an evangelic sermon in the house of God. The preacher must reach them, if at all, through society. He must so preach that the immediate hearers shall be completely armed against open or secret assaults; so preach, also, that the firmness and faith of disciples, and the earnestness of their lives, shall utter the call of Christ in the ears of those who do not visit his sanctuary, peradventure to the saving of their souls.

To cope with the subtle influence of a skeptical literature alone, filthy

and refined, in this reading age, would consume the strength and drain the resources of the most gifted mind! To dissipate the miasma that arises from a self-sufficient christianity alone, would require more of the electric current than could be discharged from the brains of all the clergy in the nation, joined together as the plates of one stupendous galvanic battery! To cut down the grateful shade of charms,—to dig the roots of superstition out of society, so that no man should trust in amulets, or festivals, or tinkling bells, or mitres; till Fetichism should be confined to Africa, would exhaust the most ingenious dialectics of any age of the Church, and leave no time nor strength to cope with any other device of satan!

And yet it is the aim of the preaching of the gospel, to bind the jaws and fetter the limbs of every monster of unbelief; to shut up infidelity and superstition to their own corruption, till they rot and perish; to snatch victims continually from the altar of death, and to lead the slaves of sin into the liberty of Christ. There are powers in the word of God, and in the gospel of his Son, able to batter the huge structures that cast their gloomy shadows across the world, and tumble them into ruins, and to mow down the bristling ranks of the enemies of the faith; but who shall handle these powers? Who shall carry a staff that is like a weaver's beam? Who shall be the artilleryman of the ordnance of God? Who shall ride the war-horses? Who bear the armor of the great Captain of Salvation? Well might the Apostle take the words out of the months of the enemies of the cross, and call that "the *foolishness* of preaching," by which the world is to be saved! If the ministry were ordained of man, the Church might well despair. But this ministry is "committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God." "It is not by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." And yet, God works by means; by the industry, faithfulness, intelligence and wisdom of his ministers. A sharp axe will cut better than a dull one, if God *is* the maker of them both. A clear, discriminating exhibition of the truth as it is in Jesus, illustrated by the *abundance* God has provided, is more effective than confused and pointless lucubrations, though it be true that when Paul plants and Apollos waters, it is God that giveth the increase. The gospel is the highest *truth*, the purest *reason*, and is received in, and giveth, *light*. God is LIGHT, and in him there is no darkness at all, and the stewards of his mysteries, instead of darkening his counsels by *words without knowledge* should make them blaze with the radiance of the Eternal Throne.

There is another sphere of ministerial labor, of great importance,—commonly called "pastoral" labor. The fulfillment of its duties is, properly, only another mode of preaching the gospel. As, however, it is ordinarily considered separately, we shall speak of it by itself.

There are the sick, the infirm and the aged, who cannot go up to the house of God, to whom the ministrations of a good pastor are invaluable, both for consolation and profit. They can read the Bible, and they have favorable opportunities for meditating upon the wonderful ways of God. They may also, some of them, have the privilege of domestic worship, and may sit together in heavenly places in Christ with christian friends. But, however happily they may be situated in these respects, they need, also, the sympathy and counsel of one whose life is given to the cure of souls, and whose constant study is how he may reclaim the wayward, and comfort and strengthen the believer.

There are the dying, from whom the world is fading away, and upon whom the morning of eternity is soon to break. The ambassador for Christ should be with them, to utter distinctly to the confused mind, the veritable issues of life; to offer at the last hour, in the name of his master, the remission of sins, by faith in the crucified Savior; to dispel the doubts of the faint-hearted, to comfort still more the joyful expectant of immortality, and to carry home with him lessons of vanity and faith for his own high calling.

There are those, also, who are in affliction. The Lord has given them sorrow to drink; their hearts bleed; the world is dark, and there is no help in man. But there is help in God, and he who can move them to take hold on the promises; assist them in coming nearer to him who is all love and all wisdom, and offer them a real sympathy of spirit, as a good pastor may, fulfills one of the highest offices of the ministry, and does a work pre-eminently like the work which Christ did, when he was in the world. He can say no more than others. He may have a heart no warmer, but he is a consoler *authorized* of God to speak peace to the believer, and to show to the unbeliever, the warmth of eternal love.

The work we have spoken of thus far, is, in our view, altogether the important part of pastoral labor. There is, however, another kind of work: visiting from house to house. It affords occasions for deepening the convictions of the unbelieving, and increasing the joy of the saint. A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver; and from house to house, the gospel may be preached, especially in seasons of

awakening, with encouraging success. And yet, after all that may be said, the advantage of ordinary parochial visitations, we apprehend, is of another kind than it is generally supposed to be. Where the attention of the people is arrested, and there are no strangers in the family circle, religious conversation may be easy and profitable. But quite frequently it occurs, by reason of a thousand circumstances over which the pastor has no control, that his visit must, in all propriety, be simply of a social character. Nor is it unimportant in this point of view. To know the habits of living, the habits of thought, the prejudices, susceptibilities, and ruling ideas of his people, is of vast moment to him as a preacher who would adapt his ministry to the minds he endeavors to teach. He must know his people. And it is a fair question to raise, whether he who keeps himself always up to the point of religious exhortation, can know them, except the few who are ready to open their hearts to him. An hour's conversation upon commerce, or agriculture, or music, or anything else, with the ease that puts others at ease, and leaves them to be themselves, is of great value to him for *right preaching*, while it serves as an entering wedge to rift the close grain of natural reserve, and open a way for the indwelling of the truth. There is no class of men in the world so much imposed upon, as to what is really in the world, and as to what their own people really are, as ministers of the gospel; for the reason that they are absent much from society, and when in it, see, ordinarily, only the unruffled and unsoiled sunday dress of human character.

Ordinary pastoral visiting, which must be done to a great extent by the day of the month, rather than by the choice of occasions, should aim, indeed, at direct spiritual improvement; and yet, if it falls somewhat short in this respect, it is still important as the means of personal interest and good understanding, between the pastor and his people.

It is a difficult thing to be a good pastor. And it is not at all surprising to any minister, and probably is not to the people generally, that in the New Testament, pastors and teachers were distinct in office, and that the office of pastor is enumerated among the "*charisms*" "or *gifts*" of the gospel. It requires intelligence and wisdom, but especially something else, which is neither intelligence nor wisdom: an indescribable capability, which embraces both, and is a hundred fold more besides. There are many good preachers who are not good pastors; and many

good pastors who are not good preachers; and rarely is it that men are found who excel in both these departments of ministerial labor. The two offices are joined together, and it is easy to see how they help one another in theory, and, to an important extent, practically; and yet it must be confessed that they are very diverse from each other. The question may occur, Which shall give way, when, in the multiplied cares of the ministry, one must yield a little to the other? Evidently, the ministrations of the sanctuary, where the multitude go to hear of God and of the way of salvation, and where they receive their impressions as to what christianity is, must be maintained. If not for salvation, as a witness, the gospel must be preached *publicly*, and if preached at all, be preached with all the discrimination and power that God vouchsafes to his servants.

IN CLOSING, WE REMARK:

1*st. A minister must have his study.* We have said that he must have a well furnished mind, and that nothing can take the place of it. He must have a right heart, and be under the guidance of the Spirit, or, whatever else he may be, he will be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. But even a right heart and the measure of the spirit which God ordinarily bestows upon his ministers, cannot secure a thorough acquaintance with the Divine Government, and a discriminating application of the principles of that government to the Church and the world, without the study and mental discipline of the man. The resources from which he may draw, are abundant; but there are no expresses commissioned to bring great ingots to his door while he is at ease, or engaged in thoughts of other things. Nor do these ingots lie scattered in the summer fields where he may gather them in a morning walk. The gold is buried deep. He must dig, and wash, and bear it away upon his own shoulders, and smelt it over fires kindled by his own hands. Pearls of thought are like the pearls of the sea. He must dive down after them, and from ocean caves, sometimes with bleeding nostrils, bring up the jewels that are to adorn his people forever. Knowledge is not so cheap a thing as to be obtained without a price. The workings of the human mind are not so obvious that he may learn them in a day. God's government is not so narrow that he can scan it by a glance. The doctrines of Christ are not so meagre,— the privileges of the saints are not so thin and shallow, that a few choice sermons can bring into obser-

vation the manifold wisdom and grace of God. It is of Jehovah, the greatest of all beings, that he speaks. It is the Bible he expounds, so profound and varied in its lessons of wisdom, that sages have found themselves, at three score years and ten, just entering upon its glories. The mind upon which he plays is a harp strung with a thousand delicate chords, from which are swept eternal harmonies only by the hand of a master. There are, however, no gifts of God without labor. And it labor, there must be time and opportunity. The minister must have his study, ample in its hours and sacred to toil. If he is kept on foot like an errand boy, the bible will be a sealed book; the ministry of the abundance of God will be only a sign of famine, and the living word become the bandaged mummy of ages that are dead.

2nd. The minister of Christ must *keep to his calling*. There is work enough for him to do in it, without putting his hand to any other enterprise. There are a great many things that *ought* to be done, but it is not every man that ought to do what ought to be done. There are different callings; let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called. Russia ought to be a good quiet member of the brotherhood of empires. There ought to be good harbors on all the lakes. There ought, perhaps, to be a lock at the mouth of our own river. But there are men whose honorable calling it may be to look after these important affairs. The minister's calling is *the cure of souls.* All that can be done by preaching Christ crucified, by leading the people to behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, by traversing the length and breadth of that kingdom which is not of this world, and showing its powers and graces to the elect of God; all that can be done with the sword of the spirit to cut through the front of wrong everywhere, but more particularly in the customs and habits of those who are within the sphere of his immediate influence, the minister of Christ may do,—but no more. When there are no passages of revelation that are dark to him, when the whole scope and glory of the scheme of salvation is comprehended, when he has exhausted the wisdom of the gospel upon believers and unbelievers, and has no more to learn or to teach, when he has solved the difficulties of every seeker after the truth, and brought his people up to completeness in Christ, so that there is no more for them to attain in this life; or when a new and better way of saving the world is discovered than that of preaching Christ, the reception of whom is the beginning and the middle and the end of all reformation, then, and

not till then, may he yield up the stewardship of the mysteries of God, for the thousand good enterprises that are not compassed and guided by, or advances of, the faith of the cross.

3d. In order to make his office truly honorable, and to do well the work which is given him to do, a minister of the gospel should *cultivate an independent spirit.* He is not to be reckless and heady; not to be opinionated and self-confident; not to be stubborn and overbearing; not to be unsusceptible to the influence of custom or a healthy public opinion; but he should be *himself*, and have an individuality as marked as that of other men. That he is a minister ought to make him none the less a *man* everywhere, who has the same rights in society, the same independence of character in reference to his habits of living and the free expression of his opinions upon all questions that agitate the community or the world, that other men claim for themselves. He may not make the pulpit the place for uttering all that he thinks and believes, except it be in reference to the gospel and its progress among men; but out of the pulpit, we undertake to say, he is something less than a man, and worthy of less respect than a man, if he cannot command for himself the freedom that belongs to every intelligent and upright citizen. No company of men may assume the supervision of his private affairs. Nor may they begrudge him his opinion on matters not directly religious, whether they be expressed in the street or in the drawing-room or at the ballot box, any more than he in return may arraign them in the sanctuary to answer for theirs. He has duties to perform as a neighbor and as a member of the body politic, from which he is not exempt because he is called to preach the gospel; and no fair minded community would wish to deprive him of the immunities and advantages, be they greater or less, that correspond to these duties.

It would be an affront to the intelligence and liberality of the people to whom we are called, to suspect a dissent on their part from propositions so self-evident to all but narrow and ignoble minds. A servile, spongy character, that sucks in its sentiments and opinions indifferently from any company into which it may happen to be thrown; that swells into almost any dimensions when there is no outward pressure, and may be squeezed into almost any shape by the hands of others, is as little worthy of regard in the eyes of high-minded and discerning men, as it is impotent to any good work in the world.

A minister must be independent, also, in the pulpit. He must not go

beyond the Evangelic Commission; nor within the range of proper pulpit ministrations must he set himself up as wiser than all the rest of the world. He must not dogmatize nor command, and yet he must speak with fearlessness, uttering the whole counsel of God; nor stop to ask the question whether it will please or displease those who hear him. He must be wise, seize upon favorable opportunities; clothe his speech with meekness, and warm it with love; and instead of thrusting himself before the truth, always hide behind it; but never moderate one tittle of the law or one iota of the gospel because it rasps the consciences of men, runs athwart their plans, and excites hostility to him or the church of which he is the pastor.

He is sent to be a leader in Israel, to utter the truths of Christ; not to fatten himself upon applause, nor to gain his livelihood through the favor which smooth words and a pleasant song may secure to him. His commission is to awake the dead, inspire the living, make known God's pleasure, fortify the truth, and to drive home the arrows of conviction wherever transgression has lodged in the heart or the life. He is to know nothing of an expediency that compromises the truth; nothing of the importance of securing the good will of any man, be he with or without influence, in the church or out of it. He speaks for his master, the great Head of the Church, and asks only, with simplicity of heart "Master, what is thy will?" and reutters that will, though he inherit the penury of the Nazarene, and although it happen to him as it did once to our Lord when many who had followed him hitherto were offended at his hard sayings, and went no more after him. The minister of Christ is a leader in Israel; and if he only floats with the current of thought, feeling and practice that glides smoothly through society, or if he falters at the judgment of men; if, for example, he waits till all the members of the church have risen up against the companies in which they are stockholders, because they send forth their trains of avarice to whistle and scream for gain in the sabbath stillness of every city and village in the land, before he thinks it wise to preach against the prostitution of God's holy day; if he fears to lay his hand on pharisaism, and strip off, as well as he may be able to, its broad phylacteries, and pronounce the woes of Christ against its anointed hypocrisies, because he will be accounted himself as wanting in spirituality; if he fears to let out the whole tide of his emotional nature into the call of God to the unbelieving and perishing; or takes counsel with flesh and blood in proclaiming any of

Christ's words to men, he is eminently unfit to be an "Ambassador,"— a "Minister" of Christ, a "Steward of the mysteries of God." Nay, if he be a man of ordinary parts, he is guilty of the profoundest folly. He has already thrown his prospects for this world to the winds, in entering upon his high calling; and then, after having laid himself upon the altar, to stammer and cringe for a *little* favor, is to lose both the world and his everlasting reward!

We have said these things in part to indicate our own purpose, and quite as much to fortify ourselves against temptation. For we of the ministry, with our susceptibilities to friendship, to personal and public favor; with our families looking to us for bread and the means of education, and with our little faith in the promises of God, for which we ought to be heartily ashamed, find that it is of no little moment to us whether we please or displease, and so are tempted to accommodate the gospel, to the disposition and tone of society,—not with such a naked proposition before us, but by the reality of it, under the specious plea of "expediency," "christian policy," and like heavenly considerations. God grant that the fear of man may never be a snare to us!

4thly. A minister of Christ *should live near to God.* The work in which he is engaged is God's work, and his commission is from Him. The design of it is to bring God into honor among men, and to bring men into the knowledge and blessedness of God. He must, therefore, sympathize with His government, and identify himself with the interests of His kingdom. He must breathe the atmosphere of the Celestial Court, and partake of the spirit of those who dwell about the Throne, in order to be a faithful and efficient servant. He cannot trust himself in the interpretation of the word, without the guidance of the Spirit. He cannot utter the call of life, and repeat the issues of unbelief, he cannot plead the cause of righteousness and salvation, unless he can say to his Father, "all thy thoughts are precious;" nor labor effectively without the assurance that God is with him, nor bear the heat and burden of the day, unless he realizes that the everlasting arm is under him.

He is a co-worker with Christ, in whom are all the springs of redemption; and he must let his pitcher down into the well of His abounding zeal and grace, for the draught that shall refresh and quicken him in every good word and work. In Christ alone does he find life for himself. In Christ alone can he levy upon the riches of the gospel for his people. Christ must be a Savior to him, so that he shall *feel* that there

are foundations under him. Christ must be a Master to him, so that he may not waver between divided counsels. Christ must be a Friend to him, so that the secrets of the Lord may come into his heart. A work is put into his hands he would not lay a finger to, did he not believe himself called of God. He is ignorant, weak, perverse, exposed,—and he must have help from above. His words may be ingenious, but they will fall like water upon the ground, unless they are filled with the Holy Ghost. He may have a little learning, but it will be thin and lean without the breath of God in it, and all the material of the schools nothing better than a formless void unless there be the brooding of the Spirit. If the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch, and he is blind, if Christ does not anoint his eyes day by day.

My friends, it is four months since I began to preach the gospel among you. I come to you now, however, for the first time on the Sabbath day, officially clothed with the responsibilities of a pastor. Nothing could have induced me to commit myself to a position so arduous, and involving so many issues, both for time and for eternity, but a desire to serve the Master, and so to fulfill my course in the world. The work of the ministry, besides its responsibleness, is burdened with labors that are never finished, and from which there is no release; and, withal, by its cares and anxieties makes, perhaps, a greater draft upon the vital energies than any other calling. It is, however, a most delightful work, identifying one, as it does, with the cause of the Savior, and engaging the attention here upon the constitution and growth of a kingdom *that shall have no end.* And I desire to give thanks publicly to Almighty God for the privilege of being among the least of those to whom, for the growth of this kingdom is committed the ministry of reconciliation. In my labors among you, I hope to have your hearty sympathy, and your unwearied co-operation. The kind attentions you have bestowed upon me and my family,—your liberal endeavors to make us comfortable and happy in this, to us, new and strange country, assure us of friendship and personal esteem quite beyond our deserts, and make us confident that you will appreciate our responsibilities, bear with our infirmities and receive our words in love.

While we do not dream of realizing our own ideal of ministerial labor or of meeting the expectations in which you are so generous as to indulge, it shall nevertheless be our care and our pleasure to serve you in the gospel according to the grace that may be given us. All our powers of body and mind and heart, are yours.

The words of welcome that greeted us at our installation,—words whose mellow cadences fell upon our spirit like a sweet dream and made us believe that we were *installed* really in your hearts, we accept as the voice of you all; and we pray God that our ministry may be such, that you who in word or spirit have welcomed Christ's minister here, may be welcomed of Christ in heaven, and share with him his exceeding glory.